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## THE LOCAL-OPTION MOVEMENT

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The temperance movement has been forming in America for a century. Having its genesis in a protest against excessive drunkenness, it passed by successive stages first to a plea for only moderate indulgence, then to a protest against inebriety in any stage, culminating later in a nation-wide demand for a universal standard of total abstinence. Here the first obstacle was met in the movement for temperance reform. Gradually there came the consciousness that the drunkard was only the product of the drunkard maker. The reformer came to see the incongruity of trying to maintain the saloon as a place of public resort, and at the same time trying to enforce the principles of total abstinence.

At once there began the movement, which has now grown nation-wide in its operations, to remedy the evils of drinking, by striking at its source in the public saloon. As a problem in social ethics, the futility of reforming the drunkard and preserving others from the drinking habit was clearly seen, so long as the public saloon was allowed to educate the people along contrary lines.

Therein lay the foundation of the present-day local-option movement in the United States. At first every form of regulation merging into restriction was experimented upon. License, low, medium and high, has been tried in every conceivable form. The restraining hand of the law has been laid heavily upon the traffic at almost every point. It has been hedged about, until the liquor business stands plainly in a class by itself, controlled and restricted as is no other business interest in America to-day. Yet has the blight of the traffic continued to fall upon our people, until the home, the church, and the electorate have each alike felt the deadly sting of its touch.

Little wonder then that a conviction began to seize the American mind that a business that could not be controlled and would not be regulated could only be destroyed. Little wonder then that

the public conscience, outraged by the excesses of the traffic, and driven to a desperate resolve by the continued lawlessness of the saloon, should have begun to suggest plans for the ultimate extinction of the public drink traffic.

When this remedy, radical as it was, was once presented, its advocates grew to a multitude in a single decade, and when civil war rent the nation almost asunder, and for the time absorbed the public mind in other great problems, a surprisingly large number of states had determined to abolish the saloon.

The dark days of the '60's were dark days for the temperance movement. The liquor men, chiefly the manufacturers, driven to desperation by the events preceding the culmination of the slavery agitation, seeing now the financial distress of the government at Washington, with rare foresight stepped to the front and asked that their products be taxed to meet the extraordinary expenses of the war. Thus in a day, by the passage of the internal-revenue laws, was a large share of public opposition mollified, and for a quarter of a century was the public conscience eased on the subject of the liquor traffic. It is said that President Lincoln, deprecating the advantage which he so readily foresaw would accrue to the liquor cause, at first refused to affix his name to the bills levying a heavy tax upon the production of liquors. Being assured, however, that they were only war-relief measures, he affixed his signature with the expectation, it is said, that the tax would be repealed with the close of the war. But when fighting had ceased Lincoln was in his grave, the war tax was perpetuated, and for twenty-five years the people seemed slow to resume a conflict with a business that was contributing so largely to the public revenues. Profiting by the absorption of public attention in the issues that grew out of the destruction of slavery and the reconstruction of the states, the liquor men, with a strategy worthy of a better cause, saw their opportunity to enter the political arena, and for forty years created and held the balance of power between parties, supporting only their friends and warring upon their enemies, while the better citizenship of every state was settling the problems of civil war. Herein lay the secret of the political power of the saloon, which has become proverbial in nearly every large city of the republic.

With the passing of the years, however, and with the growing arrogance and lawlessness of the saloon, there was crystallizing

again a public sentiment that demanded the destruction of the traffic in drink.

Maine, the pioneer in the movement to abolish rum, survived the deluge of civil war and remained true to its first principles. Kansas, by a narrow margin, in 1880, abolished the saloon by constitutional authority, followed by North Dakota with its admission to statehood. But reverses elsewhere led to an enforced reconstruction of the methods of attack. The necessity arose for a workable plan that would meet the liquor men upon their own ground and that would seek legislation of a sort that would be enforceable by the power of a concentrated local public sentiment. Georgia this time blazed the way with a plan that accorded with the true American principle of local self-government, and more than twenty-five years ago adopted a system of local option, putting the liquor question in the hands of the voters of a given local community, to determine whether or not the saloon might continue to exist therein. The wisdom of this system, which not only harmonizes the operations of the law with existing local public sentiment but guarantees under present conditions a better and more permanent form of law enforcement, is evidenced by its persistent spread throughout the nation, until to-day every state is operating under some form of local option except the three prohibition states of Maine, Kansas and North Dakota, above mentioned, the wholly license states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Washington, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah and New Mexico, and Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina and Oklahoma, which have recently passed from local option to state prohibition.

Coincident with the growth of the local-option movement, and the spread of no-license territory under the operations of such a statute, have been the origin and development of the Anti-Saloon League. This society has sought to organize and apply an awakened public sentiment as a force in politics and legislation that would outweigh and defeat the machinations of the organized liquor forces. Within this arena, and upon this basis, will a campaign be waged for the next decade, between the now thoroughly aroused liquor elements on the one hand and the rapidly organizing and solidifying anti-saloon forces on the other hand, a campaign to determine in its first analysis the extension of no-license territory to the farthest possible limit, but in its final result to establish the control of poli-

tics, legislation and government either by the forces of evil or of righteousness.

An accurate and full chronology of the progress of the local-option movement by states would not be possible within the limits of this paper. By legislation already enacted, on and after the first of next January eight states will be free from the licensed saloon. Tennessee has only three cities and one town remaining with the open saloon. Texas, with 152 entirely dry counties out of 243, will probably vote on the question of state prohibition, after the next legislature, as directed by the vote of the recent Democratic primaries in that state. Virginia has 80 dry counties out of 100; Kentucky 92 out of 119; Missouri 77 out of 114; Arkansas 58 out of 75; Florida 36 out of 46; Iowa 77 out of 99; Maryland 10 out of 23; Louisiana 30 out of 50 parishes; Delaware 2 out of 3 counties; Michigan 11 out of 84; Nebraska 21 out of 90; Oregon 21 out of 33; South Carolina 18 out of 41; South Dakota 13 out of 64; West Virginia 33 out of 55; Indiana 25 out of 92, and so on for quantity. All these states and the others which have local-option statutes have much of dry territory additional by township, town or ward option, as in Ohio, where 1,155 townships out of 1,371, and a majority of the towns are dry, and where under a new county law votes are pending in twenty-eight counties to determine the question of saloon existence therein. In Vermont, where 219 of the 246 towns are without saloons; in New Hampshire, six of her eleven cities and 180 of her 223 towns are under no-license; in Connecticut, ninety-six of 168 municipalities are dry; in Illinois, thirty-six counties and 1,053 out of 1,400 townships have abolished the saloon; in Massachusetts there are 277 dry municipalities to seventy-seven wet ones.

The effort to secure a local-option statute in Pennsylvania, the one large state where the liquor forces still have full sway, is already well under way. In the last legislature a motion to place the Craven local-option bill on the house calendar, despite an unfavorable committee report, resulted in a vote of ninety-six for the motion to eighty-nine against, lacking only eight votes of the 104 needed under the rules of the house to adopt the motion. At the April primaries the nomination of candidates for the legislature turned upon the local-option issue to a large extent, and, despite the claims of the liquor men, the Anti-Saloon League has carried the fight to

the fall election with large hope of success, and will appeal confidently to the next legislature for the enactment of a local-option law for Pennsylvania.

The Keystone State is now the great temperance battle ground of the nation. So long as it can be held wholly in the license column with no final appeal to the arbitrament of the people possible, so long will there be hope to the liquor cause throughout the nation. If their lines be broken here, their hope for ultimate victory in the nation will have fled.

There is naturally much confusion as to the real meaning of local option. By many it has been confounded erroneously with immediate prohibition. To some it is a supposed interference with personal liberty, ignoring the fact that it is the highest idea of liberty—the rule of the people locally upon a question of tremendous importance to the entire community. By some it is confused with partisan movements to the detriment of the local-option cause, and the liquor men have not failed to act assiduously in adding to the confusion along all these lines. To relieve this confusion, and to set forth the real meaning of the movement, the Pennsylvania Anti-Saloon League has just issued a concise statement under the heading, “What is Local Option?” as follows:

It is a law that enables a community opposed to saloons to keep them out, even though other places in the state may allow them to exist. It does not repeal the Brooks law, but supplements its operations. Its essential element is the rule of popular government. There can be no principle of legislation more American, or more democratic. To refuse the right of the people to determine such a question for themselves by communities, and thus permit saloons to be forced upon neighborhoods—residence districts, for instance—against the popular will, as is frequently the case, is to proclaim an autocracy of rum that is thoroughly at variance with our American usages. Local option is neither a partisan nor factional question. It simply means the rule of the people, under which, upon petition of a certain per cent of the voters of a given unit of territory—25 per cent in the Craven bill—the court orders an election in that territory to determine whether or not for a certain period of time the sale of liquors shall be prohibited therein.